

UPF-Bonn, Germany's United Nations International Day of Peace 2016

Gregor Sattler
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Bonn, Germany -- On the occasion of the International Day of Peace, a program was held to discuss the United Nations and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Organized jointly by the Bonn chapters of UPF and the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), the September 18 program was named for the theme of the 2016 International Day of Peace: "The Sustainable Development Goals: Building Blocks for Peace."

Informative videos illustrated the successes of the UN in achieving the eight Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) -- but also revealed considerable weaknesses and failures, which unfortunately dampen optimism about the 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) adopted last year.

The point was made that the Sustainable Development Goals (especially poverty reduction and environmental protection) are to be regarded as important prerequisites for peace. But these "Building Blocks for Peace" are no guarantee for the safe construction of a house in which the peoples of the world will live together peacefully. A change of awareness and attitudes among the house's inhabitants is also necessary.

UPF's Five Principles of Peace were suggested as suitable points of reference for the needed change in attitudes. These are universal principles that are acceptable and feasible for people of different religions and nations as a basis for peaceful coexistence. This understanding was supported by the positive reactions from the audience, who originated from more than 20 nations.

The fact that "ordinary people" can contribute to peace was illustrated by reports on a number of peace activities conducted by associates and members of the organizing groups. A young Ambassador for Peace is doing an outstanding job with his impressive work for the improvement of relationships between refugees, migrants and local people. He has appeared on television and has been interviewed by a number of newspapers.

The Interfaith Prayer for Syria, a new initiative in Bonn, and the ongoing Intercultural Week were additional projects that were met with great interest.

The online questionnaire "What if you ruled the world?" -- developed by the EINS company -- provoked lively reactions from the audience. Eight questions and an overview of possible answers encouraged everyone to reconsider their attitudes.

Finally two ladies and a gentleman were honored for their commitment to peace and were awarded Ambassador of Peace certificates.

In the course of the event several readings and songs performed by the participants created a very beautiful atmosphere. In sensitive ways they expressed the desire for a world without violence and armed conflicts and the hope of peace.

After the conclusion of the official part, lively discussions among the participants continued for a long time. The topic "Sustainable Development Goals: Building Blocks for Peace" is a challenge and a task for every one of us.